

Homily: Pentecost Sunday 2015: Cycle B: Acts 2:1-11; Ps 104; Gal 5:16-25; Jn 15: 26-27;
16: 12-15

“The Gift of the Holy Spirit”

1. **Today we celebrate the close of the Easter Season: the birthday of the Catholic Church: Pentecost Sunday.** It is a great mystery to ponder. The Holy Spirit, the 3rd person of the Trinity, the bond of substantial love between the Father and the Son from all eternity, descended upon each of the individual Apostles in the form of an individual tongue of fire to help them as individuals to witness to the saving message of Jesus to the world, and He also descended upon them collectively as a body to help the entire Church: the new family of God- the new Israel. He does the same for us. It is only by the Holy Spirit that we can say “*Jesus is Lord*”, according to St. Paul. And it is only by the Holy Spirit that we truly see the necessity and gift of the Catholic Church, getting beyond the human foibles and sins of individual members of the Church to the splendor of the doctrine and teaching protected and guided by the Holy Spirit down through the centuries. If we are not living in union with the Holy Spirit, in a deep interior life of prayer each day, the Catholic Church just seems like another human institution. If we are truly living in the Holy Spirit, we see that you cannot separate the love you have for Christ with the love you must have for His bride the Church. The Holy Spirit shows us that the Catholic Church is truly the ark of Salvation for humanity from the day of Pentecost until the end of time!
2. The Holy Spirit is the one who guides our spiritual lives to become in substance, the spiritual worship, in truth, of the Father through the Son that Jesus speaks about in the Gospel of St. John. If you ever wonder: **how can I make spiritual progress or grow in the likeness of Christ?** Then ask the Holy Spirit to stir up His sevenfold gifts: *wisdom, understanding, knowledge, piety, fortitude, counsel and fear of the Lord*, into the flame of love more and more. We all have the capacity to know God because we are made in His image and have received the Holy Spirit in our Baptism and Confirmation, but often He remains dormant in our souls because we are not open to Him because of ignorance or a sinfulness;

and remember He is a gentle spirit who will not force Himself on us; we must ask Him daily to transform us in Christ, with a humble and beseeching heart.

3. Once we become more and more a friend of the Holy Spirit in our life, then we will be able to **witness** more and more effectively to Jesus through the gift of our Catholic faith to all those around us in our family, among our friends and co-workers, fellow students and neighbors. Remember we are all called to do this by virtue of our Baptism and Confirmation in which we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Please reach out to those you know who are away from the Church for whatever reason and invite them back. Put them in touch with a priest or make a call to us yourself and explain the situation, to see if we could help, and what is the best way to reach them. *Sometimes all one needs to do is make a good Confession; sometimes it is more complicated, e.g. some marriage predicaments.* Nonetheless, it is so important for all of you to help us priests because you as the lay faithful can reach people we can never reach with the Faith because of circumstances of various sorts. Finally remember Christ gave the Holy Spirit the “**job**” to lead the Catholic Church, and us as members of it, **into the fullness of God’s truth.** The truth that will set us free as Jesus says in John chapter 8 verse 32. The Holy Spirit is a kind and gentle Being and so He gradually leads us into the fullness of the truth in our lives. He doesn’t reveal all at once what we need to change, for He knows we would be overwhelmed. Just trust in the Holy Spirit and He will do the rest. And then we will be filled more and more with the inner peace and joy of God - which is a prelude of the eternal bliss of Heaven. God bless you.

Recommended Reading:

Fr. Edward Leen. **The Holy Spirit and His Work in Souls.** Reprinted by Scepter Publishers. Princeton, N.J. 1998. *All of Fr. Leen’s books are excellent - deep but clear.*

Pope St. John Paul II. **The Lord and Giver of Life.** (Dominum Et Vivificantem). Encyclical Letter: May 30, 1986. Check the Vatican’s website for this, under the link for Pope St. John Paul II’s encyclical letters, (www.vatican.va); or the Daughters of St. Paul (www.pauline.org) for a copy. It is one of his best encyclical letters and one of the best explanations of who the Holy Spirit is and His role in salvation history. Check it out.